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**Subject:** Wilmington News Journal (4-4) Mountaire Farms gets state permit, denies causing well contamination

## Mountaire Farms gets state permit, denies causing well contamination

By Maddy Laura  
April 4, 2018

One week after Mountaire Farms was threatened with a federal lawsuit, the poultry company said it has been granted a state permit that will help solve at least one of the problems that led to dozens of wastewater-related violations since 2015.

Last fall, state officials said [Mountaire Farms](#) had sprayed highly contaminated waste on hundreds of acres of farm fields near Millsboro, leading to high nitrate levels in on-site monitoring wells. Those violations have primarily been blamed on a failure at the plant's wastewater treatment facility.

Last week, lawyers threatened a lawsuit and filed a notice stating that they believe the company has and continues to violate federal law by disposing contaminated waste on an already contaminated system, presenting an "imminent and substantial endangerment to health or the environment."

### THE LAWSUIT

#### [Lawyers threaten federal lawsuit to hold chicken plant accountable for pollution](#)

Mountaire maintains that, despite problems with its wastewater treatment, recent waste-related violations are not the cause of the contamination found in private wells near its Millsboro-area chicken processing plant.

"This condition has existed for decades – even before our arrival – not just within the past six months," the release said.

[The recently granted permit](#) will allow Mountaire to retrofit and reopen a lagoon formerly used to store treated wastewater on its property along Del. 24 so that built-up solids can be cleaned out of existing lagoons.

Those lagoons are one of the primary steps in treating waste produced by the plant's restrooms and from the slaughtering, packaging and processing of millions of chickens each month.

An estimated 6,000 metric tons of sludge waste will be de-watered and temporarily stored on-site in the revived lagoon near Swan Creek, a tributary of the Indian River, and then hauled to an unidentified, permanent disposal location.

The permit for that work was [highly contested at a recent public hearing in Millsboro](#), where residents questioned whether company and state officials can assure no pollution makes its way into the groundwater or Swan Creek.

## Personal Matters / Ex. 6

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A photo showing solid waste being sprayed on to a field is held up for all to see during a meeting with Mountaire Farms officials to discuss high levels of nitrates in the ground water. (Photo: Jason Minto, The News Journal)

The permit issued Thursday requires the company to self-report data and activities and store sludge for no longer than 2 years. The permit is valid through 2023.

In previous interviews, Mountaire officials have been unable to say how long the sludge had built up in the existing lagoons, but said that buildup was the primary cause of a recent “upset” at the plant.

That “upset” resulted in the company spraying contaminated wastewater on hundreds of acres of farm fields to the north and south of Del. 24.